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Healers or Interrogators: Psychology and the United States Torture Regime

Stephen Soldz, Ph.D.

United States abuses at Guantánamo and other detention centers, including the CIA's "Black Sites," have a long history. In the Cold War period, the CIA pursued an extensive research program on "coercive interrogations," which became codified in torture manuals used to train Latin American military leaders who utilized torture against their populations. Also during the Cold War, the U.S. military developed the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape (SERE) program to train U.S. military personnel in resisting torture. When the U.S. government turned to torture after 9/11, they turned to SERE psychologists to develop their interrogations strategies. This occurred, first at the CIA secret Black Sites, and then at Guantánamo and elsewhere. Psychologists helped develop, implement, and standardize U.S. torture techniques. The American Psychological Association (APA), rather than oppose this use of psychologists, provided cover for U.S. interrogation abuses. They formed a task force on Psychological Ethics and National Security—stacked with a majority of members from the military-intelligence establishment, several with possible involvement in abusive interrogations. This task force supported psychologist participation in detainee interrogations. Various APA antitorture statements since then have not changed APA's pro-participation stance. As a result, a movement of psychologists arose to oppose these APA policies.

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ON JANUARY 24, 2003, NATIONAL GUARDSMAN SEAN BAKER, stationed as a military policeman at the Guantánamo detention center, volunteered to be a mock prisoner, donning an orange suit and refusing to leave his cell as part of a training exercise. As planned, an Immediate Reaction Force team of Military Policemen attempted to extract him from the cell. When he uttered the code word, “red,” indicating that this was a drill and that he’d had enough, one of the MPs “forced my head down against the steel floor and was sort of just grinding it into the floor. The individual then, when I picked up my head and said, ‘Red,’ slammed my head down against the floor,” says Baker. “I was so afraid, I groaned out, ‘I’m a U.S. soldier.’ And when I said that, he slammed my head again, one more time against the floor. And I groaned out one more time, I said, ‘I’m a U.S. soldier.’ And I heard them say, ‘Whoa, whoa, whoa.’” Even though, unlike if Baker had been a real prisoner, the “extraction” was called off part-way through, he was diagnosed with traumatic brain injury and was left with permanent injuries, including frequent epileptic-style seizures.

When asked what would have happened if he had been a real detainee, Baker told CBS’s *60 Minutes*:

I think they would have busted him up. I’ve seen detainees come outta there with blood on ‘em. ... If there wasn’t someone to say, ‘I’m a U.S. soldier,’ if you were speaking Arabic or Pashto or Urdu or some other language in the camp, we may never know what would have happened to that individual. (“G.I. Attacked,” 2004)

This detention facility is one of the environments in which psychologists serve as consultants to interrogations. We psychoanalysts know that understanding requires a historical perspective. Events such as these, ongoing in the War of Terror have a long history, including psychologists’ participation.

Antecedents of the Current Situation: The Cold War and Other “Anti-Communist” Programs

As the Cold War shifted into high gear after World War II, people in the American government, notably the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), became concerned that Communist enemies had developed specialized techniques for mind control. At first defensively, and then as an offensive tool, the CIA undertook what became a 25-year program of research into

mind control techniques under a variety of names, including, most notoriously MKULTRA (Marks, 1991; McCoy, 2006a; McCoy & Goodman, 2006; the December 1977 *APA Monitor* [Greenfield, 1977] contains an account of some of these activities). Two components of this program are of special relevance here: (a) For years the CIA searched for a magic “truth serum” that would allow them to get captives to reveal their secrets, and (b) the CIA and the military funded extensive research into potentially effective interrogation techniques, including the possible use of hypnosis, of drugs, of isolation and extreme sensory deprivation, of brain stimulation, and so on (Marks, 1991).

The result of these studies was the development of the Debility, Dependency, Dread (DDD) paradigm for treatment and interrogation of detainees (Farber, Harlow, & West, 1957). DDD involves a systematic attack upon the sense of self. Debility involves a systematic wearing down through semistarvation, sleep deprivation, chronic pain, and attacks on the senses through sensory deprivation and/or overload. The process aims to induce a profound sense of hopelessness and helplessness that fosters a total dependency upon the captors. Accompanying these is a constant sense of dread, of fear of the immediate and long-term future (Otterman, 2007). This DDD paradigm became the model for much of U.S. torture in succeeding decades.

The coercive interrogation approaches developed during MKULTRA and related programs, including the DDD paradigm, were incorporated into the chapter “Coercive Counterintelligence Interrogation of Resistant Sources” in the CIA’s KUBARK interrogation manual in 1963 (Central Intelligence Agency, 1963). Similar techniques were contained in CIA training manuals distributed throughout Latin America in the 1970s and 80s. The only one of these manuals that became public, the 1983 manual used to train in Honduras (Central Intelligence Agency, 1983), was revealed in a January 1997 *Baltimore Sun* article titled “Torture Was Taught by CIA; Declassified Manual Details the Methods Used in Honduras; Agency Denials Refuted.” The manual advises an interrogator to “manipulate the subject’s environment, to create unpleasant or intolerable situations” (Cohn, Thompson, & Matthews, 1997, para. 9).

From this *Baltimore Sun* article:

“While we do not stress the use of coercive techniques, we do want to make you aware of them and the proper way to use them,” the manual’s introduction states. The manual says such methods are justified when subjects have been trained to resist noncoercive measures.

Forms of coercion explained in the interrogation manual include: Inflicting pain or the threat of pain: “The threat to inflict pain may trigger fears more damaging than the immediate sensation of pain. In fact, most people underestimate their capacity to withstand pain.”

A later section states: “The pain which is being inflicted upon him from outside himself may actually intensify his will to resist. On the other hand, pain which he feels he is inflicting upon himself is more likely to sap his resistance.” (Cohn et al., 1997, para. 32)

These techniques were utilized by U.S. allies throughout Latin America in the 1970s and 80s (McCoy, 2006a, 2006b). They were taught to hundreds of Latin American military officers. Between 1989 and 1991 alone, manuals describing Kubark techniques were distributed to “students from Columbia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela” (Otterman, 2007).

Similar techniques have been utilized by the U.S. during the so-called Global War on Terror. Those who have examined practices at U.S. detention facilities in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Guantánamo, such as Physicians for Human Rights (2005) in their 2005 report *Break Them Down*, have described, the “Systematic Use of Psychological Torture by US Forces.”

The practice of psychological torture in U.S. facilities includes:

- **Prolonged Isolation** for weeks, months, even years.
- **Sleep Deprivation**, sometimes allowing as little as two hours a night, for prolonged periods.
- **Sensory Distortion** including sensory deprivation (masks, goggles, removal of books or anything that can be used to distract) and sensory overload (very loud music; excruciatingly high temperatures, or hypothermia such as turning air conditioning on high).
- **Sexual and Cultural Humiliation**—forced urination on self; forced nakedness; sexual humiliation; religious humiliation (Korans being thrown around); being led naked on a leash or forced to bark like a dog.

These purely psychological techniques are often combined with another component:

- **Self-Inflicted Pain**—the infamous “stress positions,” including chaining in positions for hours on end or balancing on a box with arms outstretched and electrodes attached, as in the infamous Abu Ghraib

photograph. [This parallels the Honduras interrogation manual's tactic: "On the other hand, pain which he feels he is inflicting upon himself is more likely to sap his resistance."]

Additionally, there have been repeated claims by detainees that they were forcibly administered drugs (Stein, 2008; Warrick, 2008). Thus, as one example out of many, on March 2, 2007, the *Sydney Morning Herald* contained an account of Australian detainee David Hicks in U.S. custody. In addition to the beatings, the isolation, the cultural assaults, the self-inflicted pain, there was this line: "He was also injected with a substance that 'made my head feel strange'" (Allard, 2007, para. 38).

SERE Program

The military's Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape (SERE) program was organized to teach American officers counterresistance training in case they were captured by an enemy that did not respect the Geneva Conventions (i.e., that would engage in illegal abusive treatment; Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, 2006; Otterman, 2007). According to several journalists, many of the same interrogation techniques were "reverse-engineered" and exported to Guantánamo and elsewhere through training in SERE techniques. SERE techniques were indeed taught to interrogators at Guantánamo. Mark Benjamin (2006b, para. 5) reported that

there are striking similarities between the reported detainee abuse at both Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib and the techniques used on soldiers going through SERE school, including forced nudity, stress positions, isolation, sleep deprivation, sexual humiliation and exhaustion from exercise. The unnamed interrogation chief from Guantánamo notes in his statement that on his watch detainees were exposed to loud music and yelling. "The rule on volume," he said, "was that it should not be so loud that it would blow the detainees' ears out." The chief claimed interrogators would crank up the air conditioning to make detainees cold, and that one prisoner was also given a "lap dance" by a female interrogator "to use sexual tension in an attempt to break a detainee."

Psychologists and the SERE Program

Despite the extreme secrecy about the role of psychologists at Guantánamo, the CIA “black sites,” and elsewhere, evidence is steadily emerging that psychologists have played a central role in planning, conducting, and standardizing abusive interrogations. Reporters Mark Benjamin (2007a), Katherine Eban (2007), and Jane Mayer (2007; Mayer & Goodman, 2007) recently reported that former SERE psychologists were hired as consultants by the CIA to design the “enhanced” interrogation strategies for several of those “high value” detainees held by the CIA and to teach their technique to many other CIA interrogators. The interrogations of these detainees, which were videotaped (Soldz, 2007b), went so far as to include the partial drowning technique of waterboarding (Esposito & Ross, 2007). As the Defense Department Office of the Inspector General (2006) documented in a report quietly declassified in May 2007, SERE staff taught SERE-based “counter-resistance techniques” to so-called Behavioral Science Consultation Team (BSCT) psychologists and others at Guantánamo and consulted to interrogators in Iraq. These techniques also migrated to Afghanistan, where the top Army SERE psychologist served in late 2002 and early 2003.¹

¹The most detailed documentation of specific U.S. tactics is from the interrogation log of Mohammed al-Qahtani over many months in late 2002 to January 2003 at Guantánamo (Miles, 2007). BSCT psychologist Major John Leso was present during this interrogation (Bloche & Marks, 2005). During al-Qahtani’s interrogation he was subjected to extreme cold to the point where his heart slowed and he was hospitalized (he was then warmed up and again subjected to extreme cold), he was injected with several bags of saline solution while being strapped to a table until he urinated on himself, and he was forced to bark like a dog; we are not told what was done to him to get him to bark. He required cardiac monitoring after 60 days in a cell flooded with artificial light, being questioned for 48 out of 54 days for 20 hours at a time. He was briefly hospitalized and immediately returned for continued interrogation (Miles, 2007).

FBI agents described the effects upon al-Qahtani: In September or October of 2002 FBI agents observed that a canine was used in an aggressive manner to intimidate detainee __ after he had been subjected to intense isolation for over three months. During that time period, __ was totally isolated (with the exception of occasional interrogations) in a cell that was always flooded with light. By late November, the detainee was evidencing behavior consistent with extreme psychological trauma (talking to non-existent people, reporting hearing voices, crouching in the corner of a cell covered with a sheet for hours on end) (Harrington, 2004, p. 2).

The APA Closes Its Ranks: The PENS Task Force

As word spread about the involvement of health professionals, including psychologists, in abusive interrogations, pressure built on their professional associations to respond. The APA formed a Presidential Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security (PENS). However, the APA did not release the names of those on the task force to the APA membership, nor were the names included in its report. The PENS membership was made public only through the efforts of investigative reporters rather than by the APA (Benjamin, 2006a).²

Many of the members were psychologists with very strong and long-standing ties to the military/intelligence interrogation programs³ (Society for the Study of Peace, 2005).

Despite these reports, the U.S. government insists that al-Qahtani was treated “humanely,” as are, it claims, all the Guantánamo detainees. And along similar lines, the APA leadership has repeatedly claimed that BSCT psychologists participate in interrogations to prevent abuse, to ensure “that these processes are safe and ethical for all participants” (APA, 2005d, p. 1), despite published reports that Major Leso, an APA member, was involved in these interrogations. There have been at least three ethics complaints filed against Major Leso, dating back to August 2006. As of this writing, 23 months after that complaint, and more than 42 months after *Time* magazine posted the interrogation log of Mr. al-Qahtani, no action has been taken on these complaints or this documented record of a psychologist participating in overt torture. APA has also not publicly reported taking any steps whatsoever to investigate the repeated claims that BSCT psychologists were in Guantánamo to teach torture techniques, not to prevent their use.

In July 2005, the *New Yorker*’s Jane Mayer quoted Baher Azmy, an attorney for one of the Guantánamo detainees whose client reported physical brutality, sexual humiliation, and being injected with debilitating drugs: “These psychological gambits are obviously not isolated events. They’re prevalent and systematic. They’re tried, measured, and charted. These are ways to humiliate and disorient the detainees. The whole place appears to be one giant human experiment.” (Mayer, 2005, para. 12).

²It should be noted that the APA claims that these names were not technically secret. They were provided to APA Council and were posted on the Peace Psychology Division Web site. In fact, if one knew which sequence of eight links to click, they could even be obtained starting from the APA Web site. However, APA refused to provide the names to either reporters or members when requested. And the PENS listserv makes clear that the intent was to keep them secret. On the listserv an APA official was praised for his skill in deflecting requests for the PENS membership at the 2005 APA Convention (Arrigo, 2006).

³The following descriptions appeared in the Task Force’s official biographical statements:

Colonel Morgan Banks “is currently the Command Psychologist and Chief of the Psychological Applications Directorate of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC)... . He is the senior Army Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) Psychologist, responsible for the training and oversight of all Army SERE Psychologists, who

In addition to the majority of PENS members being from the military-intelligence establishment, the PENS process was influenced by a number of observers whose presence at the task force meetings was unacknowledged

include those involved in SERE training... He provides technical support and consultation to all Army psychologists providing interrogation support, and his office currently provides the only Army training for psychologists in repatriation planning and execution, interrogation support, and behavioral profiling." (para. 4). (APA, 2005a)

Robert A. Fein "is currently a consultant to the Directorate for Behavioral Sciences of the Department of Defense Counterintelligence Field Activity (CIFA), the DOD Criminal Investigative Task Force (CITF), and the U.S. Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center. He also serves as a member of the Intelligence Science Board." (para. 7)

Colonel Larry C. James: "In 2003, he was the Chief Psychologist for the Joint Intelligence Group at GTMO, Cuba, and in 2004 he was the Director, Behavioral Science Unit, Joint Interrogation and Debriefing Center at Abu Ghraib, Iraq. Col. James was assigned to Iraq to develop legal and ethical policies consistent with the Geneva Convention Guidelines and the APA Ethics Code in response to the abuse scandal." (para. 15)

Captain Bryce E. Lefever "was assigned to the Navy's Survival Evasion Resistance Escape (SERE) School from 1990 to 1993. He served with Navy Special Forces from 1998 to 2003 and was deployed as the Joint Special Forces Task Force psychologist to Afghanistan in 2002, where he lectured to interrogators and was consulted on various interrogation techniques. Capt. Lefever has been deployed to many parts of the world during his career including Haiti, Panama, Israel, Afghanistan, Italy, Bahrain, Crete, Puerto Rico, Iceland, Antarctica, and Spain where he has lectured on Brainwashing: The Method of Forceful Interrogation..." (para. 16)

R. Scott Shumate "has worked for the federal government in highly classified positions that have required him to travel extensively and live overseas. He has performed many of his duties under highly stressful and difficult circumstances. In May of 2003, Dr. Shumate accepted a senior position in the Department of Defense as the Director of Behavioral Science for the Counterintelligence Field Activity... DOD/CIFA is responsible for support to offensive and defensive counterintelligence (CI) efforts... His team of renowned forensic psychologists are engaged in risk assessments of the Guantánamo Bay Detainees." (para. 20)

Also on the PENS taskforce was **Michael Gelles**. Dr. Gelles was the chief psychologist for the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. Dr. Gelles was at Guantánamo in order to develop evidence for potential criminal prosecution of detainees. As he witnessed the treatment of detainees, he was outraged and became a whistleblower (Savage, 2005b). As such, Dr. Gelles is one of the few who acted honorably in this rather sordid tale. It should be remembered, however, that, in his whistleblowing, Dr. Gelles was supported by his chain of command, which was not involved in ordering or winking at any such abuse (Mayer, 2006). In any case, it remains debatable whether Dr. Gelles should have been on the PENS task force. First, as an employee of the military, like the other PENS members from the military and intelligence services, his career could be directly affected by the outcome of the PENS process. Further, as a psychologist and military interrogator, Dr. Gelles was in no position to seriously consider the view that involvement in interrogations was, in itself, unethical.

The task force also included four members not affiliated with the military/intelligence establishment, three voting members and a Chair closely allied with APA leadership. One of the voting members subsequently resigned from the task force (Shinn & Woolf, 2006) and two have called for the PENS report to be rescinded (Arrigo, Thomas, Rubenstein, Anders, & Goodman, 2007).

until dissident member Jean Maria Arrigo revealed them in a talk at the 2007 APA Convention (Arrigo & Goodman, 2007). These observers reportedly had connections high in the military-intelligence establishment (APA, 2003, 2004, 2005d; American Psychological Association & FBI Academy, 2002; Coalition for an Ethical Psychology, 2008) and, as indicated by a former counterintelligence agent, could have sent a silent warning to task force members that their deliberations would be known to those high in their chains of command (Arrigo & Goodman, 2007).

Examination of the PENS listserv (Arrigo, 2006) and recollections of PENS members (e.g., J. M. Arrigo, personal communication, August 2006) indicate that the question of whether psychologist participation in interrogations was ethical was never seriously discussed by the task force. The first draft of the PENS Report, prepared by the Director of the APA Ethics Committee during lunch recess on the first meeting day, asserted, "Psychologists have a valuable and ethical role to assist in gathering information that can be used in our Nation's and other nations' defense." The task force went on to discuss the role of international law and rejected it, accepting instead the primacy of United States law (Arrigo, 2006), despite the fact that it was well known by then that the Bush administration had reinterpreted U.S. law to permit "harsh interrogations" (Danner, 2004; Greenberg & Dratel, 2005; Hersh, 2004).

Not surprisingly, the PENS report concluded "that it is consistent with the APA Ethics Code for psychologists to serve in consultative roles to interrogation and information-gathering processes for national security-related purposes." (APA, 2005c)

The task force went on to state, "While engaging in such consultative and advisory roles entails a delicate balance of ethical considerations, doing so puts psychologists in a unique position to assist in ensuring that such processes are safe and ethical for all participants." (para. 3)

This phrase stating that psychologists helped keep interrogations "safe and ethical" was borrowed from the draft instructions to the Behavioral Science Consultation Teams from Col. Morgan Banks that were provided to the task force on the first morning of its meeting (Coalition for an Ethical Psychology, 2008). Those instructions stated that the mission of the BSCTs was to "provide psychological expertise and consultation to assist command in conducting safe, legal, ethical, and effective interrogation and detainee operations." (Ariyo, 2006) Those same instructions made clear that laws and military regulations have primacy over professional ethics as embodied in the APA ethics code: "The Ethics Code is always subordinate to the law and regulations" (Coalition for an Ethical Psychology, 2008, p. 10). The

PENS report took a similar position, based on 2002 revisions to ethical principle 1.02 the APA Ethics Code (APA, 2002), which allowed psychologists to “adhere to the requirements of the law, regulations, or other governing legal authority” in the case of irreconcilable conflict, undoing the association’s previous assertion in principle 1.03 its 1992 ethics code which required psychologists to “resolve the conflict in a way that permits adherence to the Ethics Code” (APA, 1992; Coalition for an Ethical Psychology, 2008; Olson, Soldz, & Davis, 2008).

In handling this report after its writing, the APA did not follow normal procedures and did not present it to the elected Council of Representatives for discussion and approval. Rather, within days it was presented to and approved by the APA Board of Directors in emergency session, circumventing Council, informing the Council of Representatives post facto (Olson et al., 2008).

Other Professional Organizations

In contrast to the APA, the American Medical Association in June 2006 adopted the following position: “Physicians must neither conduct nor directly participate in an interrogation, because a role as physician-interrogator undermines the physician’s role as healer and thereby erodes trust in the individual physician-interrogator and in the medical profession.”

The American Psychiatric Association took a similar course. In June 2005, the same month the PENS task force met, it expressed concern over the reports of psychiatrist involvement in abuses at Guantánamo: “The American Psychiatric Association . . . is troubled by recent reports regarding alleged violations of professional medical ethics by psychiatrists at Guantánamo Bay. APA is reviewing issues related to psychiatry and interrogation procedures and plans to develop a specific policy statement in the near future”. (para. 1)

In May 2006, the American Psychiatric Association went on to ban all direct participation in interrogations by psychiatrists: “No psychiatrist should participate directly in the interrogation of person[s] held in custody by military or civilian investigative or law enforcement authorities, whether in the United States or elsewhere.” (para. 3)

American Psychiatric Association President Steven S. Sharfstein devoted a significant portion of his 2006 Presidential Address to this issue:

We must . . . exercise vigilance over our other core values. When I read in the *New England Journal of Medicine* about psychiatrists partic-

icipating in the interrogation of Guantánamo detainees, I wrote to the Assistant Secretary for Health in the Department of Defense expressing serious concern about this practice. In mid-October I found myself on a Navy jet out of Andrews Air Force Base ... on a 3-hour trip to Guantánamo Bay. We were ... briefed thoroughly on interrogation methods and the involvement of Behavioral Science Consultation Teams

After returning to Andrews, we began a spirited 3-hour discussion over dinner. I found myself looking eye to eye with top Pentagon brass—they are much taller than I am, but we were sitting down. I told the generals that psychiatrists will not participate in the interrogation of persons held in custody. Psychologists, by contrast, had issued a position statement allowing consultations in interrogations.

President Sharfstein went on to contrast the psychiatric association policy with that of the APA:

If you were ever wondering what makes us different from psychologists, here it is. This is a paramount challenge to our ethics and our Hippocratic training. Judging from the record of the actual treatment of detainees, it is the thinnest of thin lines that separates such consultation from involvement in facilitating deception and cruel and degrading treatment. Innocent people being released from Guantánamo—people who never were our enemies and had no useful information in the War on Terror—are returning to their homes and families bearing terrible internal scars. Our profession is lost if we play any role in inflicting these wounds. (Sharfstein, 2006)

As President Sharfstein looked eye to eye with Pentagon brass, then APA President Ronald Levant along was along for the trip to Guantánamo. While the psychiatrists' president told the brass "that psychiatrists will not participate in the interrogation of persons held in custody," here is what the psychologists' president had to say upon return:

I accepted this offer to visit Guantánamo because I saw the invitation as an important opportunity to continue to provide our expertise and guidance for how psychologists can play an appropriate and ethical role in national security investigations. Our goals are to ensure that psychologists add value and safeguards to such investigations and that

they are done in an ethical and effective manner that protects the safety of all involved. (APA, 2005b, para. 3)

During the same period, in February 2006, then president Gerald Koocher expressed an even more dramatically contrasting view: “A number of opportunistic commentators masquerading as scholars have continued to report on alleged abuses by mental health professionals.” (para. 4)

The two professions, although engaged in apparently similar work, took radically divergent positions: The psychiatrists took a moral position, at the cost of a potential loss of access to top military decision makers and funding providers, while the leadership of psychologists, in contrast, have put access and potentially funding above taking a moral stand on the perversions of the War on Terror. In the process of protecting this access, the psychological association regularly used deception and bad faith, continuing to argue that participation in interrogations is indeed ethical (Soldz, 2006a, 2006b).

The association leadership worked persistently to protect the ability of psychologists to participate in “national security” interrogations, even at times claiming an ethical obligation to do so to prevent harm to society, presumably from the “terrorists” imprisoned there for the last 5 years (APA, 2005c; see also Olivia Moorehead-Slaughter’s 2006 (para. 10) report on the PENS Task Force she chaired: “as experts in human behavior, psychologists contribute to effective interrogations”).

These efforts paid off: On June 7, 2006, the *New York Times* reported:

Pentagon officials said Tuesday that they would try to use only psychologists, and not psychiatrists, to help interrogators devise strategies to get information from detainees at places like Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The new policy follows by little more than two weeks an overwhelming vote by the American Psychiatric Association discouraging its members from participating in those efforts. Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, told reporters that the new policy favoring the use of psychologists over psychiatrists was a recognition of differing positions taken by their respective professional groups. (Lewis, 2006, paras. 1–3)

Keeping Interrogations Safe and Ethical?

Following the PENS report, the APA was convulsed with controversy about the leadership’s steadfast defense of psychologist participation in de-

tainee interrogations at all costs. APA leadership deflected the issue by repeating its claim that “psychologists have a critical role in keeping interrogations safe, legal, ethical and effective,” as the PENS task force chair expressed it (Moorehead-Slaughter, 2006, para. 10). This statement might appeal to psychologists who wish to believe, for defensive or other reasons, that their profession has some unique moral quality that makes them able to resist the situational pressures that affect others involved in intelligence work (Costanzo, Gerrity, & Lykes, 2006; Olson & Soldz, 2007; Olson et al., 2008; Soldz & Olson, in press; Zimbardo, 2006, 2007b). Furthermore, the APA claim is based upon the assumption that interrogation abuses are the result of “a few bad apples” rather than of systematically designed and conducted procedures, procedures that themselves are abusive but that, as so frequently happens (Rejali, 2007), also lead to practices beyond their design as they unleash interrogators’ creativity and sadistic impulses (Hersh, 2004; Soldz, 2007c; Zimbardo, 2004, 2007a).

Careful attention to the public statements of even those who promote the view that psychologists’ involvement has a benign effect reveals decisive inconsistencies within their own view. For example, at the APA Council meeting of August 2007, Col. Larry James, often presented by the APA as a prime example of psychologists preventing abuse (Farberman, 2008), declared, “If we removed psychologists from these facilities, people are going to die” (“Human Wrongs,” 2007). However, in a recent article, James was interviewed following the revelation that there was a secret ‘camp-within-a-camp’ at Guantánamo, housing the 15 high-level detainees being prepared for the first major terrorist trials. In reporting on the admission by the Guantánamo commander of the existence of Camp 7, the reporter questioned Col. James, commander of the Guantánamo BSCTs, about his knowledge of the Camp. In his reply Col. James explained the following:

“I learned a long, long time ago, if I’m going to be successful in the intel community, I’m meticulously—in a very, very dedicated way—going to stay in my lane,” he said. “So if I don’t have a specific need to know about something, I don’t want to know about it. I don’t ask about it.” (Selsky, 2008, para. 2)

In fact, there is not a single report in the public record of a psychologist actively opposing abuse ordered or condoned by his or her chain of command.

Indeed, the claim that psychologists act to protect safety had privately been contradicted by a key APA figure years earlier. In the lead up to the PENS task force, then APA President-Elect Gerald Koocher wrote the PENS listserv describing how he saw the role of psychologists in national security work: "The goal of such psychologists' work will ultimately be the protection of others (i.e., innocents) by contributing to the incarceration, debilitation, or even death of the potential perpetrator, who will often remain unaware of the psychologists' involvement" (Coalition for an Ethical Psychology, 2008, p. 10).

Anti-Torture Resolutions in the APA

In the years since PENS, the anti-torture groups within the APA have tried to change the direction of its policies. In response, there have been several resolutions condemning torture. Although these resolutions sometimes went beyond those of other professional associations in their broad condemnation of "cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment," outlawed by an international treaty signed by the United States (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2004), these resolutions as ethical statements were generally weakened by legalistic parsing of language, which has left them ineffectual and tolerant of the status quo. The internal political processes surrounding these resolutions were, similarly, generally characterized by the APA leadership's tactics that diffused efforts at clarification. These various developments are well described in various reports, including those by individuals closely involved in these negotiations (Altman, this issue; Reisner, 2007; Soldz, 2006a; Soldz & Olson, 2008; Woolf, 2007).

For example, a call for a moratorium on psychologist participation in interrogations at detention facilities where fundamental human rights are being violated at the August 2007 APA Convention, led by Neil Altman and a number of other psychologists, including a vocal cadre of members of the association's psychoanalytic section, was undermined by an alternative motion introduced by the APA Board that would ban psychologists participating in a number of specific interrogation techniques while allowing continued participation in detainee interrogations (APA, 2007).

The resolution that passed contained significant loopholes (Coalition for an Ethical Psychology, 2008; Soldz, 2007a). Thus, the resolution banned only certain techniques when they were "used in a manner that represents significant pain or suffering or in a manner that a reasonable per-

son would judge to cause lasting harm” interrogations (APA, 2007). These loopholes were such that some in the media wondered whether “psychologists still abet torture” (Benjamin, 2007b; Benjamin & Goodman, 2007; Pipher, 2007).

Despite whatever hopes the APA leadership had that passing an anti-torture resolution with some specific content would quiet the controversy, opposition to APA interrogation policies mushroomed after the convention. The *Houston Chronicle* (“Human Wrongs,” 2007) condemned the policy in an editorial. Noted psychologist and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Reviving Ophelia*, Mary Pipher, returned an award she had received from the APA to protest association policy (Pipher, 2007). Several prominent psychologists resigned from the APA in protest (Pope, 2008; Shinn, 2007). Over 300 members of APA withheld their dues in protest (withholdapadues.com, 2008). Various other groups condemned the APA’s interrogations policy, including a number of psychology faculties (Department of Psychology of Earlham College, 2007; D. Goodman, 2008; Jaschik, 2007a, 2007b; Woolf, 2007). A bill to discourage health professionals’ involvement in detainee interrogations was introduced in the California State Legislature (Bill Documents: SJR 19, 2008) and similar efforts are underway in New York and other states. Steven Reisner, a longtime APA critic on this issue, launched a campaign for the APA Presidency and topped the balloting in the first round nomination stage (A. Goodman, 2008; Reisner, 2008). All of this criticism parallels stringent inquiries about U.S. government interrogation policies in Congress, the popular media and among the presidential candidates, both of whom oppose torture of detainees.

At its February 2008 meeting, in response to the pressure from critics, the APA Council adopted a modification of their 2007 anti-torture resolution that removed the loopholes that had distressed critics. The APA also sent letters to various government officials that, in stating APA policy, implicitly criticized U.S. government detention and interrogation policies. At the same time, the APA remained silent about the roles of psychologists in U.S. interrogation abuses, maintaining the fiction that the role of psychologists in U.S. national security detentions was largely positive. Thus, in a letter to President Bush, the association president and CEO wrote, “Psychologists consulting to the military and intelligence communities, like their colleagues in domestic forensic settings, use their expertise to promote the use of ethical, effective, and rapport-building interrogations, while safeguarding the welfare of interrogators and detainees” (Brehm & Anderson, 2007, para. 3).

I have been unable to locate one statement by any APA leader or official forthrightly acknowledging that psychologists played major roles in the torture and other abuses that are reported by the media almost daily.

Conclusion

Guantánamo, the CIA black sites, and other U.S. detention facilities have been designed to break people down, to destroy them, whether they are innocent or guilty, whether they have any intelligence value or not. We cannot rule out that they have been designed as intentional experimental facilities designed to develop and test new behavior manipulation techniques. In any case, they constitute the “gulag of our time” as Amnesty International (Norton-Taylor, 2005) described Guantánamo. At the time of writing, organized psychology had still not confronted its failure to act to stop those abuses and our profession’s complicity in them. Almost a half century ago, reflecting upon those who aided and abetted horrible abuses in another dark time, Hannah Arendt (1992) wrote of the “banality of evil.” Psychologists involved in these torturous practices should not receive the same protections accorded for benign professional activities. Rather, it is critical that the psychological profession and its organizations come to terms with our potential for harming others and, indeed, society itself.

Psychoanalysts are well aware that defensive denial of reality leads to stunted development. We help our patients come to terms with the fact that within them are potentials for good, but also for destructiveness. Similarly, we must come to terms with the processes of deceit and denial used by our professional organizations, and by many of us as individuals, to avoid facing these harms. It is time that psychology as a profession, along with the other health professions, takes the lead in contributing to the building of respect for humanity rather than aiding the creation of hell: Surely we, as psychologists and psychoanalysts, should be leaders in recognizing the humanity of all, even those identified as alleged “terrorists.” Carrying out our moral obligations as citizens and as human beings is of far greater importance than is maintaining our professional access to the levers of power (see Summers, this issue).

Much could be gained if psychology, in conjunction with the other health professions, takes the lead in forming a truth and reconciliation process facing up to the roles our profession has played in these dark times. Reckoning with this harsh reality can pave the way for our professions to

make the institutional and moral changes that can reduce the likelihood of collaboration in future state abuses.

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